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# "How Beauteous Mankind Is": Utopian (In)humanity as Questioned by Shakespeare and Answered by Huxley

Jason Kelliher

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“How Beauteous Mankind Is”: Utopian (In)humanity as Questioned by Shakespeare and  
Answered by Huxley

Jason Kelliher

Submitted in Partial Completion of the  
Requirements for Commonwealth Honors in English

Bridgewater State University

December 19, 2014

Dr. Michael McClintock, Thesis Director  
Dr. Courtney Beggs, Committee Member  
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## Introduction

Ever since writers first dared to dream of a better world, the idea of utopia has served as both a fascinating and perplexing force in literature. Defined as both “a place, state, or condition ideally perfect in respect of politics, laws, customs, and conditions” and “any imaginary, indefinitely-remote region, country, or locality” by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, utopia has always existed simultaneously as a good place and a nonexistent place (though Thomas More invented the word itself mere centuries ago). Paired with the Greek root *τόπος* (place), the word’s two superposed prefixes *εὖ*- (good) and *οὐ*- (not) convey both of these senses. Stretching all the way back to antiquity, the history of utopian literature is intertwined with our history as a civilized species. The canon, in demonstrating over the course of millennia all of our societal concerns and aspirations, allows us to exhaustively reflect on how our ruminations on the ideal society have steadily evolved through the ages. Although the majority of texts in this ever-expanding canon are worth noting, I point to William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1611) and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) as especially useful texts for further examination. These works are by no means the authoritative sources of utopian thought, but they are irrefutably significant in that they are two parts of the same conceptual discussion. This discussion, as it turns out, highlights the flaws in utopian idealism and interrogates the manner in which mankind uses available resources to realize authoritarian (yet deceptively picturesque) visions of society. The purpose of my argument is to demonstrate that while Shakespeare and Huxley produced their respective utopian texts more than three hundred years apart, the intertextual conversation that exists between *The Tempest* and *Brave New World* serves to frame the evolution of utopian thought, reveal previously unexplored aspects of the utopian canon, and bring nuanced meaning to the utopian-dystopian dialectic. In addition to this primary objective, I

also intend to distinguish utopianism from utopia proper, delineate several sub-genres of utopian literature, and explain how humanism is both a requirement for and antithetical to the establishment and maintenance of a utopian society.

My argument centers on *The Tempest* and *Brave New World* but will also situate both in the context of the entire utopian tradition. In a brief literature review, I will establish the validity of my approach by identifying and assessing multiple works of relevant literary theory. This conceptual conversation will be followed by a condensed history of pre-Shakespearean utopias that is designed to show how antiquity and Renaissance utopists (e.g. Plato, Thomas More) primed the canon for Shakespeare's investigation of utopian themes in *The Tempest*. As the first of two texts to be examined in depth, *The Tempest* will serve as a foundation for the thematic discourse that will be carried through to Section IV. Before fully transitioning to my analysis of *Brave New World*, I will explain (in brief) how Shakespeare's reimagining of utopia gave way to new sub-genres, the most notable of which being the satirical utopia (e.g. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*) and the dystopia. Finally, I will close by examining how Huxley answered Shakespeare's lingering questions with the scathing insights of *Brave New World* and how this eerily prophetic novel irrevocably affected our understanding of the utopian-dystopian relationship. In presenting these conclusions, theories and other concepts in the chronological order described here, I intend to ultimately demonstrate the profound influence that the utopian canon has had on literature and, by extension, mankind.

On the whole, the prevailing literary criticism surrounding utopia has consistently substantiated the multiple thematic links between the works of Shakespeare and Huxley (despite the numerous ideological differences amongst theorists). For one, the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch finds the "utopian territory of problems" (88) to be of paramount importance. In A

*Philosophy of the Future*, Bloch makes it clear that although he is a sincere believer in utopia, texts like *The Tempest* and *Brave New World* are necessary to put theories of societal idealism to the test. To Bloch, the failure of any fictional utopia indicates a need to re-examine utopian thought. Thus, Shakespeare and Huxley's shared conversation becomes a matter of refining utopian belief so that the pursuit of perfection can be seriously considered for real-world applications. In a direct commentary on Bloch's theories, fellow Marxist critic Fredric Jameson contends that existing modes of literary interpretation would wrongly place texts like *The Tempest* and *Brave New World* in the realm of quasi-religious allegory. Instead of limiting utopian texts to being simple representations of didactic aims, Jameson theorizes that utopias (and arguably, their pessimistic dystopian counterparts) have more to do with reconciling the allure of utopia with the unconscious understanding that such perfect societies are simply proposed corrections of perceived real-world societal ills (150). For Shakespeare and Huxley, this means that their works are not merely morally instructive, but politically reactionary as well. More recently, literary and cultural critic Neil Postman maintains that the nature of utopia (and increasingly, the real world) hinges on the ideas of hedonism and apathy:

All that has happened is that the public has adjusted to incoherence and been amused into indifference. Which is why Aldous Huxley would not in the least be surprised by the story. Indeed, he prophesied its coming. He believed that it is far more likely that the Western democracies will dance and dream themselves into oblivion than march into it, singe file and manacled. (110-111)

Challenging both Bloch and Jameson, Postman cites the Huxleyan dystopia as the more accurate model of utopian discourse. *The Tempest* and *Brave New World*, in emphasizing the de-humanizing effects of enforced bliss, thus uphold Postman's views just as well (if not better)

than those of Bloch and Jameson. These three works, though not entirely in agreement, all point toward a theoretical distinction between utopianism and utopia. Neither Bloch, Jameson, nor Postman equates the idealistic impetus (utopianism) with the ideal society itself (utopia). Rather, these theorists treat the former as a condition of the latter. One cannot establish a utopia without the desire to do so, and yet such desire could ostensibly exist without the envisaged society ever taking shape. This understanding, coupled with the variety of approaches to utopian theory, defines the utopian genre as one that requires further investigation beyond what has been previously undertaken. The unconventional awareness of genre shared by *The Tempest* and *Brave New World* make both texts outliers in the utopian canon and are thus the most useful vehicles for such continued investigation. In this sense, Shakespeare and Huxley allow us to assess and expand the catalogue of relevant literary criticism in more ways than were previously thought possible.

Before engaging these texts, however, it is important to understand how the utopian genre gradually developed a dire need to be re-examined. In the age of antiquity, the definitive utopian texts were Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Plato's *Republic*, Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*, among others. In addition to these Greco-Roman works, the biblical books of Genesis and Revelation shaped much of mankind's utopian thought before the Middle Ages. Excluding the book of Revelation and *The Republic*, these works focused on the loss of a past ideal state rather than realizing a future or present ideal. This long-gone paradise, named "Eden" in the Bible and the "Golden Age" by Hesiod, was a singular fascination for countless early utopists (*Utopia Reader* 2). As previously mentioned, the etymology of the term "utopia" situates it between being ideal and nonexistent. Understandably, this created a tension between writers who wanted to postulate the formation of a perfect society and those who believed utopias to be forever lost.



In the Middle Ages, the imagining of utopias was even discouraged due to the pervading religious belief that such worldly aspirations for material bliss should be forsaken (*Cambridge Companion*). The first text since the *Republic* to trust mankind alone with the establishment of the perfect society was Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), the work from which the etymology of the term *utopia* can be traced. By putting the responsibility of societal improvement directly in mankind's hands, More introduced Renaissance humanism to the utopian genre. Though he did not obligate future utopists to follow the same humanist model, his espousal of an eloquent, cultured and educated citizenry did well to challenge strictly utilitarian approaches to societal perfection. Subsequent utopias (e.g., Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, 1602, Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, 1666) followed suit by putting more and more emphasis on the realization of human potential (*Utopia Reader*). By the late Renaissance, utopian literature had evolved from the lament-driven pastorals of antiquity to the religious inventions of medieval writers and ultimately to humanistic expressions of optimism in turn. William Shakespeare, taking issue with all three of these utopian modes of thought, composed *The Tempest* so that certain disquieting aspects inherent in the (previously unquestioned) genre would be known to all.

### ***The Tempest as Shakespeare's Investigation of Utopia***

First performed in or around 1611, *The Tempest* bears the mark of an experienced dramatist. It encapsulates a multitude of thematic discourses, including those concerning romance, postcolonialism, feminism and tragicomedy. In form and content, *The Tempest* draws from a number of sources, the most notable being William Strachey's *True Reportory of the Wrack, and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight*, the translations of Michel de Montaigne's 1580 essay *Of the Cannibals* and Erasmus' *Nauffragium* (1523) (*Tempest: Sources and Contexts*).

As a work of utopian literature, it is one of the first texts to consider the troubling implications of a purportedly ideal society. In contrast to Thomas More's occasional willingness to leave the likely snares of a perfect society unexplored, Shakespeare does not gloss over the potential pitfalls of utopia; instead, he offers a remarkably frank exposé of the dangers inherent in unexamined utopian thinking. Inevitably, the result is a more self-aware utopia that rejects idealistic sincerity in favor of a more analytic approach. By problematizing Prospero's rule (where others would laud it), Shakespeare thus uses *The Tempest* as a vehicle for highlighting thematic inconsistencies and other ignored issues within the genre.

For the purpose of assessing *The Tempest* as a utopian text, it is first necessary to comprehensively examine Prospero's control over his methods, his subjects and his island. The wizard's authoritative perceptions of himself, his spirits, Caliban, Miranda, his lordly captives, and the physical space they all inhabit collectively contribute to his profile as the quintessential utopian leader. Prospero criticizes his brother for his usurpation while ignoring the fact that he himself is a usurper, calling Alonso "unnatural" (5.1.79) even though he is guilty of the same crime. In tandem with this flawed claim are Prospero's efforts to separate his magic from that of Sycorax in order to assert a moral right to sovereignty. It is doubtful that his rule is more just than the old witch's, as his methods often embody the kind of treachery he constantly attributes to Sycorax. Prospero's hypocrisy is first made clear when the wizard threatens to imprison Ariel in an oak tree for "twelve winters" (1.2.296) immediately after recounting how Sycorax confined the spirit to "a cloven pine, within which rift / imprisoned [he] didst painfully remain / a dozen years" (1.2.277-279). In a manner that will ultimately be emulated by Huxley, it is alleged that the ruling class (i.e. Prospero) "freed" others from the old ways. Despite Prospero's rhetoric, it is plain to see that this "liberation" forces lower classes into specific, pre-determined roles in

society and robs them of the capacity for social advancement. Prospero lists the liberal arts as his source of power (1.2.72-74), implying not only that the wizard subscribes to Renaissance humanism but also that such pursuits are reserved for those who rule. In utopias and dystopias, lower classes are restricted to the “mechanical arts.” The wizard’s colonization of the island requires everything to be named and perceived as he defines it. In this way, what Sycorax and Caliban knew as the “bigger” and “less” (1.2.335-337) lights become the sun and the moon by Prospero’s decree. Even the structure of the play itself is subject to Prospero’s control, as he demands early on that his scheme should take place between the “mid-season” (1.2.239) of the day and six o’clock. Moreover, the wizard’s magic ensures that all of the characters of the play are confined to the same physical space. In forcing the play itself to conform to the classical unities, Prospero demonstrates a compulsive need to exercise absolute authority. While it is true that Prospero forfeits his staff and books by play’s end, it is unclear whether he does so for ethical reasons or simply to assure (by disposing of any and all distractions) that he would not be so easily usurped again. Also, the fact that he changes from his magicians’ robes to his regal attire suggests an intention to hide the symbols of limitless power from the lords when he first greets them in Act V scene i. Prospero is powerless without his magic, like any other man. In order to maintain the illusion of divinely-sanctioned hierarchy, he acts as an absolute monarch (similar to the self-perceived role of James I) to manipulate the thoughts and actions of all other characters, requiring them to practice restraint and discipline in his name. Despite appearances, Prospero is by no means the ideal ruler he perceives himself to be.

Uncharted, unnamed and ruled by the power-hungry Prospero, the island setting of *The Tempest* has been viewed by many readers as a representation of any colonized space. Its location between Tunis and Italy situates it somewhere in the Mediterranean, but its precise

location is of little importance. Instead, Shakespeare draws his audience's attention to the abnormal goings-on that differentiate the utopian island from all others. The island-centered storm in Act I scene i removes the significance of official titles and renders the lords equal to (if not lesser than) the mariners. Rank and supremacy are shown to be a pretension in the swirling chaos of human survival. As the men near their assumed demise, the boatswain calls the lords out on their helplessness in times of human peril despite their sociopolitical power:

You are a councillor [*sic*]; if you can command these elements to silence and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your authority! If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap. (1.1.20-26)

For Prospero's purposes, the ship represents a state without a master wherein humanity is plunged into chaos for want of a legitimate ruler. As the former duke's usurpers are all on board, it becomes an easy choice for Prospero to use his powers as a way of teaching Antonio and the others this lesson in politics. Upon landfall, the men inhabit not only the physical space of the island but also the "state" of the island that is bound by Prospero's authoritative control. This balance between natural location and invented dominion is at the forefront of Prospero's mind, as it is his most fundamental desire that the latter absorb the former. By portraying both aspects of the island and denying Prospero full control over its physical space, Shakespeare implies that even the most aggressive of colonizers cannot fully assert their authority over a physical landscape.

Amid Prospero's ongoing power struggle, the lords periodically offer insights as to the nature of utopian rule. Gonzalo's speech in Act II scene i is taken almost directly from Montaigne's *Of the Cannibals*, which considers natives to be attuned with nature while civilized

colonists are the true barbarians. By eliminating service, law and industry, Gonzalo claims that his commonwealth would be a society of “no occupation” (2.1.155), but rather “all abundance” (2.1.164). Even with all of the utopian ideals established by Gonzalo, the fact remains that such a society would need a governor. By pointing out this glaring oversight, Sebastian asserts a fundamental flaw with creating and maintaining a truly perfect society. Undeterred, Gonzalo is not ashamed to explore the idea of utopia even though Sebastian and the others mock him. (The society he describes is a “no-place” and theoretically impossible because it is modeled on a myth. In *Brave New World*, we will see the unfortunate results of putting such ideas into action.) When Miranda looks upon the lords for the first time, she utters the lines that will eventually serve as a thematic foundation for Huxley:

O, wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,

That has such people in't! (5.1.181-184)

This world, peopled by more men she has ever seen before (as she had only seen three men prior to this meeting) and awe-inspiring in its novelty, captivates Miranda. Prospero, knowing that the lords are less reputable than Miranda assumes, warns his daughter that the so-called “brave new world” is not admirable as much as it is simply “new to [her]” (5.1.184). Correspondingly, the prototypical “savage” only admires the civilized ruler because both parties fail to see the colonizers as the monsters that they are. In this instance, Prospero is cautioning against the kind of idolization that keeps men like Antonio in power. Since this counsel would apply to his own rule as well, it is likely that Prospero is also downplaying the amazing idea of the world beyond his island. As he feels his control over Miranda steadily loosening, he can do no more than

snidely remark that the larger world only seems better than his utopia because it is a new concept.

Miranda and Ferdinand, though genuinely enamored with one another, are made a couple as part of Prospero's realization of his utopian vision. Even the young lovers' initial spark is set off with a carefully-planned artifice wherein Ariel lures Ferdinand to Miranda with music in Act I scene ii. Prospero, upon recognition that his power as a ruler can hold weight over his daughter's budding relationship with the prince, decides to take the reins from that point onward. His utopia leaves no room for sexual freedom, which explains why the wizard demands that the young lovers marry. Again, Prospero defines what is natural and then requires others to adhere to that model. For this reason, Caliban, having expressed an intense desire for Miranda, earns his master's scorn as an "abhorred" (1.2.352) and "brutish" (1.2.358) sexual deviant earlier in the scene. In order to gain Prospero's approval, Ferdinand undergoes an extended period of forced labor that echoes the civic service models of previous utopias. After the carefully regimented courtship comes to a close, Prospero puts on a marriage masque that invokes images of a never-ending season of plenty:

Spring come to you at the farthest,

In the very end of harvest.

Scarcity and want shall shun you,

Ceres' blessing so is on you. (4.1.114-117)

By using his power, the wizard convinces Ferdinand that all things, most notably the abolishment of winter and scarcity, are possible in his utopia. Ferdinand, like the lower classes of *Brave New World*, is unable to see the true nature of his situation because he is distracted by the wonders provided by the society's seemingly omnipotent ruler. Miranda, being accustomed to her father's

magic, is less amazed by the masque. This does not mean that she is critical of Prospero, since years of indoctrination have and isolation robbed Miranda of any basis for critique and thus ensure that she would not (or more accurately, could not) take issue with her father's methods.

Prospero's political ideal, utopia, depends on the concept of humanism because the latter accredits humans with the power of creating the perfect society. As a secular system of thought, humanism is distinct from earlier philosophies in that it puts the power of change in the hands of humans rather than ascribing the same power to God or fate. Humanism holds that as masters of their own destinies, people are free to reject any form of moral authority that does not contribute to the advancement of humanity or denies the collective power of human beings (*Cambridge Companion* 7). While it is true that humanism is a requirement for utopia in that it imbues humans with the belief that they can perfect society, it is also irreconcilable with utopia because it must be discarded if any perfect society is to be maintained. In Huxley's imagined utopia, an unwavering faith in humanity's collective ability would have been necessary to establish the World State. Once established, this utopia is quick to downplay the power of the human spirit so as to prevent any future social upheavals. In this way, humanism is a requirement for utopia only until it becomes a threat to the very social order that it helps to establish. To a certain degree, this is true even in *The Tempest*; the utopia of the island is founded by a man, Prospero, who has a strong belief in his power to affect change as a human being, but once he sees the same capacity in his subjects he endeavors to moderate humanist sentiments wherever possible.

The character of Caliban is central to any reading of *The Tempest*, but in the context of utopian literature his significance rivals even that of Prospero. From the beginning of the play it is clear that the implicit conflict between Caliban and his master is that Caliban is successfully resisting Prospero's conditioning and retaining a connection to nature. While it is true that

Caliban is under Prospero's control in the physical world, he is free in his mind; he still hears the natural "sounds and sweet airs" (3.2.131) of the island in his dreams because Prospero's power does not extend that far. Despite Prospero's constant attempts to impose his views on his slave, Caliban still perceives the island without any kind of authoritative definition. Caliban regrets showing Prospero his naturalistic perspective of the island, since the wizard has used this knowledge to distort the landscape to achieve his own ends. He is wary of Prospero's methods for this reason, and yet he welcomes the prospect of being ruled by Stefano. The wine administered to Caliban makes all the difference in this regard. Used as a bargaining chip by Stefano, it serves the same purpose as the soma in *Brave New World*, dulling the monster's senses and making him subservient. Captivated by the power of chemical-induced bliss, both he and all World State citizens are infantilized, seeking only the instant gratification provided by their "generous" masters. In time, however, Caliban realizes that he should have never "take[n] this drunkard for a god" (5.1. 300). Interestingly enough, Caliban's insult works for Prospero just as well as it does for Stefano. Neither man has a legitimate claim to power over Caliban or the island, but Prospero finds no fault in exercising the authority he has forcibly established. Though Prospero takes Caliban's last line as a sign of repentance, it is more likely that Caliban's parting words are actually a veiled denial of the wizard's alleged right to rule.

Shakespeare, in questioning the utopian canon with *The Tempest*, paved the way for other inquisitive authors who would seek to do the same. As demonstrated by the publication of Sir Francis Bacon's serious-natured *New Atlantis* in 1624, traditional utopian thought still existed; however, the impact of *The Tempest* ensured that such manifestations of genuine hope would eventually lose their footing. The genre that largely took the place of the straightforward utopia was the satirical utopia, exemplified by Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). Surviving



strands of traditional utopian discussion (that is, earnestly positive utopias) eventually took the form of *euchronia*, or the utopia of the future (*Cambridge Companion* 9). Apocalyptic utopias such as W. H. Hudson's *A Crystal Age* (1887) emerged as a subgenre within *euchronia* and envisioned the establishment of a perfect future after a devastating cataclysm grants the world a clean slate. Extending slightly into the age of dystopias, more satirical utopias such as Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) and William Morris' *News From Nowhere* (1890) built on their authors' various criticisms of contemporary society. While the emergence of satirical utopias and other sub-genres certainly contributed to the growing resistance against traditional utopian thought, few serious ideological discrepancies surfaced within the canon until the popularization of the literary dystopia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As an early model of this burgeoning genre, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* was poised to bring a new understanding to the lingering uncertainties (e.g., redefining human nature, imposed "happiness") with which Shakespeare was primarily concerned.

### ***Brave New World as Huxley's Response to Shakespeare***

Published in 1932, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is one of the few defining texts of the dystopian canon. As with *The Tempest*, Huxley's novel is subject to a number of possible readings, each with its own interpretation of the text's dominant themes (e.g., sexuality, religion, consumerism). Inspired primarily by the utopias of Wells and the widening political divide of a post-war world, Huxley produced *Brave New World* as a dystopian satire of various utopian ideals. The title is, of course, a reference to Shakespeare, whose 1611 play provided Huxley with a plethora of questions that no utopian author had yet to answer fully. As Huxley's first true dystopia, *Brave New World* distinguishes itself from the author's earlier satires by being markedly more plot-driven and purposefully moralistic. Dissimilar to Yevgeny Zamyatin and

other dystopian writers who warned of future totalitarian violence, Huxley warned of a future state-sanctioned culture of hedonism. In this sense, *Brave New World* is unique in that it acknowledges the possibility of a “pleasure” dystopia, or a spoiled society that has the semblance of utopia. Huxley’s insistence on fashioning his fictional world after the utopia of Prospero’s island has irrevocably altered the idea of dystopia; by bringing *Brave New World* into the utopian canon, Huxley proves that the intangible bonds of material need and sublime comfort are just as strong as the cold iron shackles of most other dystopias.

As a utopia, the World State is everything that Prospero’s island is meant to be and more. The World Controllers, having eradicated the existing world order after hundreds of years of social conditioning, exert control over a strictly stratified society with little to no resistance. Similar to Prospero’s baiting of his would-be killers with cheap garments (4.1.221-254), the whole of civilization is distracted by petty consumerism that is carefully managed and promoted by the state. As with any regime, the World State could be overthrown by a unified and agitated population, but the people of *Brave New World* are too pacified to care. After all, what more could they want? They work relatively short hours at simple jobs and are encouraged to spend every waking moment of their free time in the pursuit of worldly pleasures (e.g., sex, soma consumption, going to the “feeling pictures”). There are no wars, diseases, sources of strife or even dissenting opinions. In this sense, reality in the World State reflects the idleness and peace of Gonzalo’s commonwealth at a price. While it is undeniable that the citizens of the World State are happy, they are not free. Even in the upper castes of this picturesque society, it is evident that a large part of what makes people human has been sacrificed. In *The Tempest*, the part of the “citizens” is played by Stefano and Trinculo, who are continuously absorbed in mindless pleasure-seeking. As shown by Stephano’s threat to hang Trinculo from a tree in the event of

mutiny (3.2.33-34), it is evident that the butler thinks himself greater than his companion; nevertheless, both fools are subject to the same habits that keep them from advancement or self-realization. In the same way, the World State's Alpha class considers itself highly superior to "those nasty little Gammas and Deltas and Epsilons" (Huxley 76) while in reality it is no closer to a true sense of humanity, which exists only on the Reservation. Some Alphas, like Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson, have enough awareness to question the status quo. In the safety of Bernard's company, Watson expresses his concern that the World State is leaving him unfulfilled:

Speaking very slowly, "Did you ever feel," he asked, "as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out? Some sort of extra power that you aren't using – you know, like all the water that goes down the falls instead of through the turbines?" (Huxley 72)

Though Watson is willing enough to fit the mold and thereby ignore his existential crisis, indiscretion of this magnitude never goes overlooked for long; as a condition of the utopia's complete control over its people, dissidents are sent away so that the "perfect society" is left unquestioned and thus undisturbed. The dynamic that exists between the World State and its citizens is characterized by many more manifestations of control, but the perversion of the utopian ideals of peace and bliss are perhaps the most potent reminders of Huxley's authorial intent.

It can be argued that in responding to Shakespeare, Huxley sought to differentiate utopianism from utopia proper. Though utopianism has always been closely linked with the broader idea of utopia, it is more useful to distinguish the two terms as separate yet habitually interacting concepts. Utopianism, unlike other –isms that reference their root word directly, takes

on independent meaning by signifying a state of mind. While utopia proper is a physical location or some sort of actualized political layout, utopianism refers to the impetus that leads to such developments. By that token, utopianism is not the same as utopia in the same way that hunger is not the same as a meal. Utopianism becomes manifest in society's various undertakings to establish a utopia (and the establishment of a utopia is unlikely to occur without a utopist mindset), but it remains evident that utopianism and utopia are distinct as the "impetus" and the "outcome," respectively. Popular usage holds utopianism to mean "the theory of utopia," but this over-simplification prevents the same discourse that Shakespeare and Huxley aimed to inspire within the canon. In *The Tempest*, Gonzalo's wistful utopian musings are starkly contrasted with the troubling reality of the actualized utopia in which he and the other lords are trapped. Later on in the play, Ferdinand is entranced more by the ghosts of utopian possibilities (Iris, Ceres and Juno) than the society that Prospero promises him. In both of these instances and more, Shakespeare conveys a nagging sense that the achieved reality of utopia is a disappointing manifestation of the utopian mindset. This assessment is carried into *Brave New World*, where the utopian ideals of intellectuals like Helmholtz do not align with the reality of their situation. An educated Alpha-class intellectual, Helmholtz wants the World State citizenry to write and think "piercingly" but laments that one cannot "say something about nothing" (Huxley 73). For Helmholtz, this "nothingness" is understood both as the lack of available writing material and the philosophical emptiness of the World State itself. Both Watson and Gonzalo imagine better societies than the "perfect societies" they encounter, which is why they are defined by utopianism and not utopia proper. The same can be said of John the Savage, who is initially entranced by the idea of the World State and yet ultimately hateful of the World State itself. These characters distinguish the "impetus" from the "outcome" because the utopian ideal

remains flawless so long as it only exists in their minds. By highlighting the difference between utopianism and utopia, Shakespeare and Huxley argue that their respective depictions of the so-called “ideal” fall short of what the product of idealism is meant to be.

The “ideal” of the World State is a product of the aforementioned commodification of bliss but is also a result of the close control of various human impulses. Natural impulses (e.g. sex) are only deemed good if they can serve as a distraction, while devoted love, culture-longing and truth-seeking are all seen as threats. Nobler motivations such as these are acknowledged as naturally occurring only in the sense that Huxley credits mankind (i.e. John) with the inherent inclination towards such moral principles. Lower-order impulses, especially those concerning the body, are consistently valued over higher-order motives, though both are considered natural. The World State distinguishes what it considers the “good” natural impulses (pleasure-seeking, consumption, etc.) from the “bad” natural impulses (devotion, curiosity, etc.) so that it can effectively promote one and undermine the other. Only the ruling castes have access to culture and intellectual discourse, which keep them (and Prospero) in power. When Mustapha Mond quotes Caliban in Chapter 16, he demonstrates a degree of familiarity with Shakespeare that impresses even John (Huxley 197); unfortunately, it soon becomes apparent that this knowledge is only used as an instrument of power (in that Mond can more effectively understand and thereby subvert threats to the World State). In terms of sex, the World State lauds promiscuity but condemns the idea of family. John is interested in devoted love instead of sex alone, which marks him as a savage. Quoting Ferdinand, he praises “admired Lenina,” who (to him) is “indeed the top of admiration, worth what’s dearest in the world” (Huxley 172). Lenina, who is for the most part a model promiscuous citizen, concerns others with her singular obsession over John, as any romantic fixation is taken as a sign of monogamy. It would be a mistake to characterize this

rejection of commitment as a reversal of Prospero's sexual attitudes (i.e. discouraging promiscuity), since the ruling class in both *The Tempest* and *Brave New World* both require a substantial degree of control over sex. The fact that one authority figure frowns upon lust and the other celebrates it is irrelevant; in either case, their subjects do not have the freedom to choose between sex and abstinence. Huxley alters the definition of "natural" impulses as understood by Shakespeare in order to emphasize the idea that the World State shares Prospero's predisposition for classifying and delineating the laws of nature to meet a certain agenda. In both Shakespeare's play and Huxley's novel, the goal is to exert control over the notion of the impulse itself, whether that means full expression to absolute repression.

Multiple characters take on the role of Prospero, from the Director for fathering an innocent savage to Bernard for introducing a savage to "civilization" for his own ends; however, it is clear that the most apt substitute for Prospero in *Brave New World* is Mustapha Mond, a World Controller who manipulates technology and human nature to consolidate power and promote trivial happiness. Like Prospero, Mond maintains power by demonizing the "old ways." He believes that the World State remedies the once-imperfect human condition, which was rife with chaos and hardship before the establishment of utopia. He acknowledges that such hardship grants a form of fulfillment, but only because "being contented has none of the glamour of a good fight against misfortune, none of the picturesqueness of a struggle with temptation, or a fatal overthrow by passion or doubt" (Huxley 199). The World State's restructuring of society, Mond argues, is the reflection of the world's need to sacrifice consciousness, individual agency, and free will for stability. By acting as the broker of this "price we have to pay" (Huxley 199), Mond assumes the same "absolute ruler" role championed by Prospero. Since the novel is not as rigidly structured as *The Tempest*, which is impelled by Prospero to adhere to the classical

unities, it is apparent that Mond does not have the same control over *Brave New World's* form; however, this does not mean that he has any less power. Rather, it simply indicates that Shakespeare took a step into meta-cognition that Huxley did not. Whether or not this could have been meaningfully accomplished by Huxley is irrelevant since it is unclear whether this technique would have truly altered Mond's power dynamic. He exercises absolute control regardless of how the novel is structured, and in many ways he is more successful than Prospero. Mond is present near the beginning of *Brave New World*, but it is not until his conversation with John that the World Controller fully outlines the ideological positions with which Huxley takes issue. In this conversation, John argues that Shakespeare and the culture of the old world cannot rightfully be phased out by more ephemeral distractions brought on by technology, remembering that despite the amazing capabilities of modern machinery, it is still more amazing that "Ariel could put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes" (Huxley 146). Mond plays Prospero by damning Shakespeare's (or Sycorax's) celebration of the human in its natural state, and by extension he damns John's reverence of cultural relics. The consumption of old things does not create good consumers because people become less interested in buying new things. Moreover, praising such unashamed nods to human nature borders on perversion, if not outright sacrilege. Similar to O'Brien in George Orwell's *1984*, perhaps the most frightening aspect of Mond's character is that he truly believes in what he says. Even though he is remarkably intelligent, he does not question the path on which he and the rest of the World Controllers have set humanity. Bernard, Helmholtz and John may not love the World State as Winston Smith ultimately learned to love Big Brother, but Mond ensures that all three of them are taken out of the picture. With the Alpha dissidents in exile and the Savage dead, Mond is secure in his rule once more.

The spirit Ariel is an important point of connection between *The Tempest* and *Brave New World* due to the fact that he is a form of technology to be used for utopian ends. Unlike Prospero, Ariel is not inherently evil because he cannot mean any harm. He is used in evil ways, but he has no power to resist those who use him. In *The Tempest*, Ariel and the lesser spirits do not bother Caliban unless commanded to do so by Prospero. In Act V scene i, Ariel wishes to free the lords from their afflictions “if [he] were human,” (5.1.19) but cannot under Prospero's command. World State leaders demonstrate the same kind of malicious control over 26<sup>th</sup> century technology, forcing it to fulfill authoritarian goals (e.g., eliminating social activism, increasing dependency) without considering more humane applications. As in *The Tempest*, the appropriate use of hatcheries, soma tablets, “feelies” and all other forms of biopower is solely determined by the owners and operators of available technology. With his assertions that “even science must sometimes be treated as a possible enemy” (Huxley 202) and that “[Controllers] have to keep [science] carefully chained and muzzled” (Huxley 203), Mond makes it clear that these technological advances, like Prospero's spirits, are kept on a leash so that science will do what is required of it without leading people to higher truths and thus “undo[ing] its own good work” (Huxley 204). Similar to how Ariel is a stand-in for technology in *Brave New World*, Huxley implies that *The Tempest*'s Setebos is God in the World State, replaced by a deity more appropriate for the needs of the utopia and its leadership (i.e. Henry Ford). God requires self-denial, which is incompatible with the hedonism of the 26<sup>th</sup> century. John protests that “God doesn't change” but in a very telling answer, Mond replies that “men do, though” (Huxley 208), thereby finding reasons to change their idea of God. The concept of God's malleability is again clarified by Mond's assertion that “the gods are just. No doubt. But their code of law is dictated, in the last resort, by the people who organize society; Providence takes its cue from men”



(Huxley 211). In the same sense that Ariel was the weapon with which Prospero killed Setebos, technology is the weapon with which Mond kills God. By unwillingly aiding in such utopian ends, technology makes it possible to idealize the assembly line and downplay the moral and religious values of a more “primitive” age.

In addition to deifying industry, World State science suppresses and redefines nature instead of operating in accordance with it. Even Caliban's “thousand twangling instruments” (3.2.132) and dream-like “voices” (3.2.133) are unsafe from the World State’s hellish reimagining; with hypnopaedia, the nightly whispers once enjoyed by Prospero’s slave are corrupted and turned into the siren song of the new world order. In Chapter 2, a tour group observes as a class of sleeping Beta children are hypnopaedically instilled with a sense of social satisfaction by “whisper[s] under every pillow” (Huxley 35); later, when John asks if the machines read Shakespeare, his “civilized” companions can only laugh at the absurdity of the Savage’s ideas. In the hatcheries, babies are cloned, intellectually stunted and shock-trained by technological means. The novel begins with a hatchery director explaining these processes to the aforementioned tour group, all the while cheerfully informing them that such grotesque innovations are “the major instruments of social stability” (Huxley 18). Like Ariel and the spirits, these devices do not choose to bring about these horrific atrocities but are commanded instead. The ruler(s) of a utopia (Prospero, World Controllers, etc.) will always have a need for technology because it regularly enables the impossible. Since utopia itself is defined by the impossible, a clear vision of technology usage is a requirement for any purportedly perfect society. As shown by Shakespeare and Huxley, however, the fine line between scientific paradise and a calculatingly dehumanizing hell may be crossed depending on the ways in which available resources are used.

As perhaps the most culturally significant character in *Brave New World*, John is as central to reading Huxley as Caliban is to reading Shakespeare. Much like Prospero's slave, John maintains that the power of cultural imagination surpasses the might of modern technology in its wonder. As a representation of this mostly forgotten culture, Shakespeare's work deeply affects John "because it meant more, because it talked to *him*; talked wonderfully and only half-understandably, a terrible beautiful magic" (Huxley 123). A sheltered native of the Reservation, the Savage exhibits a profound naiveté that is slowly undone by the bleak reality lying just under the surface of the World State. John begins as Miranda in that he marvels at the world beyond the Reservation at the outset, but then turns into Caliban as he learns to curse it. He initially recites "O brave new world" with sincere wonder, answered by Bernard in a way that echoes Prospero's "'tis new to thee" (Huxley 130). Over time, the *Tempest* quotation is used more and more disdainfully as John sees the World State for what it really is. In contrast to Mond's use of a philosophical debate to endorse blissful hedonism, John uses the same platform to reject the eternal springtime of *The Tempest*'s marriage masque:

You got rid of them. Yes, that's just like you. Getting rid of everything unpleasant instead of learning to put up with it. Whether 'tis better in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them ... But you don't do either. Neither suffer nor oppose. You just abolish the slings and arrows. It's too easy. (Huxley 214)

As perhaps the world's last man in its truest sense, the Savage wants reality, complete with all of the pain and cold that comes with it. Sex, soma and leisure all tempt John, but he knows that giving in to these temptations would be tantamount to giving up his last claims to freedom. The World State has managed to provide these and other endless comforts at the cost of a true sense

of humanity. Seeking solitude and a life of independently rewarding labor, John secludes himself in a lighthouse and is granted a panoramic view of the world he rejects. To his dismay, he becomes more of an oddity and public spectacle the more he tries to live in opposition to the “nauseous ugliness of the nightmare” (Huxley 190) that is the World State. His breaking point comes when he realizes that his self-induced punishment has become just one more pleasurable distraction for World State citizens, who gather to ogle the Savage “like swine about the trough” (Huxley 230). By committing suicide, John denies the public the morbid entertainment he was unwillingly providing them. Given the visual of John’s toes turning to face every corner of the earth “like two unhurried compass needles” (Huxley 231), it is clear that even in death, he issues judgment as he spins on a noose. Using the same “moral compass” that John represents, Huxley similarly issues judgment on the real world that inspired his novel and takes solace only in the fact that the horribly “perfect” society of *Brave New World* has yet to be completely achieved.

However optimistic Huxley was in 1932 about mankind’s ability to prevent the creation of the World State or anything similar, his later works (as well as the works of other dystopian authors) outlined a deepening fear that humanity was actively doing just the opposite.

Responding directly to his own novel, Huxley produced the 1958 essay *Brave New World Revisited* as a vehicle to discuss the ways in which the world has ignored too many of his warnings. From overpopulation to propaganda, consumerism and brainwashing, Huxley outlines the various elements of dystopia that are taking hold in reality. The primary solution Huxley offers is to strive for the expression of freedom, for “without freedom, human beings cannot become fully human” (340). Given the multiple vehicles for expressing freedom that Huxley describes (e.g. education, social organization, legislation) and his implicit argument for the power of cultural imagination made apparent with the publication of *Brave New World*, it thus

becomes a worldwide imperative to remain increasingly vigilant in the defense of liberty and democracy. The same sentiment of vigilance was applied to most (if not all) of the texts that followed *Brave New World*, including Sinclair Lewis' *It Can't Happen Here* (1935), Ayn Rand's *Anthem* (1938) and multiple works of George Orwell. Later texts, such as Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and Phillip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), strayed from the *Brave New World* model by depicting dystopias that were defined by a singular ill (e.g. knowledge-fearing, uber-violence, drug abuse). Over time, the dystopian canon became crowded with writers seeking to grandstand their own views on freedom and tyranny. Also, the prevalence of technology in these narratives rendered the dystopian genre virtually indistinguishable from that of science fiction in many cases. At present, the trend of dystopia in literature poorly reflects the purpose of such texts as argued by Huxley and his contemporaries. The flooding of new dystopian authors indicates that the concept of dystopia is perceived to be profitable. In a way, this echoes *Brave New World* and the manner in which John's self-flagellation becomes the "next big thing." With the exception of a select few authors whose serious literary work is grounded in the concept of societal tension and the many nuances of utopian debate (e.g. Margaret Atwood, David Foster Wallace), the dystopia is now becoming part of the trivia that it was once meant to criticize. In the end, however, it is fortunate that the canon has provided enough profound and focused works to compare to the present; if it were not for the work of Huxley and his contemporaries, such introspection would not be possible.

### Conclusion

Taken independently, both William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* are highly significant contributions to the English canon; when taken together

in the specific context of utopian literature, however, they are even more remarkable. Produced centuries apart, the two form a meaningful and cogent discussion of utopia and utopianism, an enormous feat in and of itself. Even more, the works of Shakespeare and Huxley bring significance to facets of utopian thought that had been all but overlooked by other writers. Building off of classical and Renaissance models, Shakespeare produced *The Tempest* as a way of bringing thematic inconsistencies to the surface. His utopia, in giving off the semblance of paradise, hides a cheerless autocracy governed by a man obsessed with subjective definition and colonization. Huxley's society, a gleaming future utopia, follows suit by masking the dystopian nightmares of wanton hedonism, mass manipulation and mankind's willing detachment from humanity. *The Tempest* and *Brave New World* do not describe the same society *per se*, but Prospero's island and the World State are two sides of the same coin. They are both arenas in which nearly identical aspects of utopianism are tried and tested; as such, they are inseparable in the ongoing utopian discussion to which they have both so meaningfully contributed. There are perhaps no two texts that function together so profoundly in the whole of the utopian canon as *The Tempest* and *Brave New World*. More might be remembered for coining the term "utopia," but it is fitting that Shakespeare and Huxley be remembered for cooperatively experimenting with the idea of a better world when all others were content to simply dream of it.

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